Charity Makes Eid A Festival Of Humanity

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

The word 'Eid' in Arabic means 'returning at regular intervals'. Eid al-Fitr marks the end of Ramzan. The sacred month of Ramzan is the time for earnest labour, fasting, prayers and the study of the Holy Quran. And the loftiest achievement of the moral exercises is celebrated with great zeal on Eid al-Fitr.

It is reported that when the Prophet of Islam saw the new moon at the coming of the month of Shawwal, He said: "O God, make this moon a moon of peace for us" (Musnad Ahmad, Hadith 1397). This saying of the Prophet expresses the true spirit of Eid, which is meant to promote spiritual values among people and create a peaceful environment in society.

Eid al-Fitr is celebrated with the spirit of thanksgiving all over the Muslim world, by offering prayers to God, and rejoicing in the accomplishments of the act of dedication and submission to the Almighty. Under normal circumstances, followers pay obeisance to the Lord in a congregation – displaying the real spirit of brotherhood, equality and fraternity through congregational prayers and feasts.

In these challenging Covid times, everyone should offer Eid prayers in their homes, in order to show our solidarity with other human beings, that we wish them peace, wellbeing and good health. Such well-wishing is essential in our closely interlinked world, which is facing such challenging times.

Eid al-Fitr is celebrated by sharing happiness with the rest of mankind. So as not to forget those who are afflicted with poverty, ignorance, disease and other misfortunes, it is obligatory to donate to charity before offering the Eid prayers.

According to a Hadith reported by Ibn Abbas: The Prophet made Zakat al-Fitr obligatory for the fasting person to keep him from idle talk and indecent conversation and to provide food for the needy. Discharging this duty before the prayer is accepted as Zakat, while doing it after the prayer is just sadaqah, voluntary charity (Sunan Abu Dawud, Hadith 1609).

THE SPEAKING TREE

Zakat al-Fitr perfects the fast of Ramzan and purifies it of any indecent act or speech on Eid. It is obligatory for all Muslims – young, old, men and women. Everyone who possesses over and above what is needed as basic food for the duration of one day and night, must pay Zakat al-Fitr for himself and on behalf of his dependants, and distribute it amongst the poor and needy. The earlier it is given, the easier it is for the needy to make arrangements, so that they too can take part in the Eid celebrations without any difficulty.

Eid al-Fitr reminds us that real happiness lies in sharing with others the bounties that God has given us. The needs of fellow human beings should never be ignored. For, the real essence of Eid lies in spreading happiness and love all around us, especially by helping the poor and needy.

When celebrated this way, Eid will energise the whole community, bringing people together in harmony, gratitude and sharing. Then Eid al-Fitr will truly become Eid al-Insaan, a festival of peace and humanity.